

Application No:	Consultee Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2022/3853/P	Vicky Richardson	12/10/2022 21:18:41	OBJ	<p><b>West Yard</b></p> <p>The installation of an Observation Wheel in the West Yard of Camden Lock will have a devastating impact on one of Camden's most beautiful and distinctive places. The wheel will transform it from a public space filled with vibrant stalls, colourful boats and people enjoying the space and spectacle, to a private fairground attraction. The wheel will damage the area culturally and physically, reducing public space, blocking views of a heritage asset, and having a negative impact on residents and businesses. The observation wheel will accentuate the feeling of over-crowding, with likely queues filling the remaining space of the yard surrounding the base of the structure.</p> <p>It is a serious concern that a temporary attraction could easily turn into a permanent fixture, particularly if its removal is contingent on the structure of the wheel being reused. There are precedents for temporary structures to become permanent – for example the London Eye. The danger of the wheel not being removed is stronger in a period of economic austerity.</p> <p>My concern is that the applicant has submitted for a temporary period because a permanent, lasting and sustainable proposal for future uses of Camden Lock could be far more expensive.</p> <p>The Observation Wheel is nostalgic and inappropriate as a concept. Apart from being damaging in its impact on the space and surrounding buildings, the idea of an Observation wheel does not reflect or link to the cultural history of Camden or the aspiration to revive culture and the arts. There is no logic for it, and the views from it are underwhelming.</p> <p>It's not clear why an observation wheel would attract a more diverse audience. The observation wheel is an attraction that is most likely to attract visitors from outside the area and tourists, and is unlikely to be of interest to local people (or affordable), who the application wants to address.</p> <p>The wheel has no cultural or artistic connection to the proposed exhibition centre, which has an entirely different function. It is not clear what the design or function of the proposed educational exhibition area around the base of the wheel in the West Yard is.</p> <p>The design access statement 1 refers to Camden's history of showmanship, the arts, music, and rebellious spirit. An observation wheel is something more associated with a provincial fairground attraction. Tired and old-fashioned, observation wheels have in recent years been replaced by bespoke designs such as the London Eye or Brighton 1360 tower or skywalks.</p> <p>The DA statement refers to the Great Wheel of Earls Court of 1893. It is hard to see why an idea from this era is appropriate to put Camden Lock back on the cultural map or raise interest. It is actually more likely to damage the potential for the East Vaults and Dead Dog basin to become arts venues rather than enhance its reputation and make it attractive for young people, and cultural partners. Certainly, the aspiration to host the Turner Prize is not consistent with a nostalgic ferris wheel. Its design and lack of technical innovation is not in line with Camden's cultural offer - for example, the BL, BM or Roundhouse.</p> <p>The poor design (or lack of bespoke design) of the wheel is not appropriate to the design quality of Camden Lock and its value as a heritage asset.</p> <p>Design Access statement 3 makes it clear that the observation wheel is an off the shelf product from a</p>

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manufacturer. Detail about the design and manufacturer is lacking, except that it states the cover plates will be removed to reveal the structure. This is inadequate, given the aspiration to look to the future, and bring in arts and culture at the highest level.  
Images show the Victorian ferris wheel at Earls Court the 'great wheel' which dates to 1894. Things have changed!

Installation of the wheel will be physically intrusive, requiring 5 foundations. It's not clear where the drive engines for the wheel are located.

The physical presence of the 40m high wheel will damage the townscape and heritage of Camden Lock. It will be intrusive and damaging to the landscape and heritage of Camden Lock. As the heritage statement itself states, the area is not about spectacular high-rise, it is about the fine grain of materials, landscape, bridges and walkways that bring people closer to history and nature. The application itself refers to the 'tight knit urban grain' as Camden Lock's defining character as a heritage asset. The addition of the observation wheel would damage the urban grain, be out of scale, have no relationship either to its physical presence or historical narrative. In particular it would damage and undermine the impact of existing landmarks of the townscape such as the Interchange chimney and weeping willow trees.

Views from the Observation wheel, as indicated in the DA statement are underwhelming, which is precisely because the area is one of fine urban grain rather than spectacular towers, public buildings and landmarks (as with the London Eye in central London).

The wheel will create [REDACTED] on the opposite side of the canal.

The presence of the wheel would actually undermine efforts to bring to life the history of the area by obscuring and reducing the impact of heritage assets such as the Interchange Building.

I find it devious that in DA statement 8, the wheel is illustrated in its most minimal position (view 1) so as to reduce the perceived impact on the surrounding heritage buildings.

Loss of public space and amenity in the West Yard

Although the water in the West Yard will not be covered, it will be out of use for canal boats. This will result in a great loss of colour, liveliness and amenity for visitors, residents and businesses. The appeal of the canal boats, and bustle of people visiting market stalls in the west yard is illustrated in fig 2.1 of the townscape statement. This will be lost to make way for the base of the observation wheel.

It is not clear why the area around the wheel is designated as exhibition or educational space or how this is reflected in the design.

There will be a significant loss of public space to accommodate the base of the wheel, the pavilion and the entrance/exit and area taken up by the queue.

East Vaults and Dead Dog Basin

It is positive that part of the East Vaults will be opened to the public, giving limited access via a jetty to Dead

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				<p>Dog Basin. However, it is a pity that around half the area will be given over to refuse, and this part of the vaults is closest to the canal, arguably the most interesting part of the structure and with most potential for the public to understand the relationship between the vaults, the basin and the canal.</p> <p>It is not clear what the content of the permanent exhibition will be. The application describes several cultural partners, but if this exhibition is to be permanent (in other words a museum or permanent venue), then its design should reflect the content and narrative of the exhibition and objects/material to be displayed. The planning application states as its aim the need to attract diverse audiences, but the potential of an exhibition centre to attract audiences, diverse or otherwise, depends largely on its content and management.</p>

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